

PART II - INTRODUCTION

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OCD is the state agency responsible for overseeing the development of the Consolidated Plan. Participation from citizens, agencies, groups, organizations and others concerned with housing and community development in Washington State was encouraged throughout the process.

In developing the Consolidated Plan, OCD formed a Strategic Planning Team to assist the state in identifying the needs, priorities and strategies for the Plan and the ways the state could ensure citizen participation throughout the process. The Team included representatives from public housing authorities, housing developers, realtors, the Washington Association of Counties, the Washington State Housing Finance Commission, the Affordable Housing Advisory Board, Columbia Legal Services, the Washington Ports Association, the Washington Community Economic Revitalization Team, Rural Community Assistance Corporation, the Washington Lenders Network, the Washington Low-Income Housing Network, the Washington State Coalition for the Homeless, and Community Action Agency Directors Association. The Team provided valuable input at each critical stage of the plan's development and helped to maximize citizen participation.

Citizen Participation

Citizen participation is an essential part of all of OCD's programs that focus on locally identified needs and priorities. In addition to the information and insight gathered through the Strategic Planning Team and other public input processes, OCD acknowledges the valuable advice and counsel that has been provided by the Washington Community Economic Revitalization Team and the OCD Resource Team. This involvement demonstrates the state's commitment and follow-through in making every effort to broaden public participation in the development of the Consolidated Plan.

The following describes the citizen participation process for Washington State's 2001 – 2005 Consolidated Plan.

Community Survey

As part of the consultation process for this Consolidated Plan, Bay Area Economics (BAE) conducted a statewide survey of local governments, private and non-profit developers, economic development agencies, real estate brokers, and related organizations. OCD mailed more than 1,500 survey forms on December 23, 1999, and received a total of 341 responses. OCD used two versions of the survey; a "short form" for entitlement communities (those communities receiving HUD funding directly) with a focus on affordable housing using the state's HOME funds, and a "long form" for non-entitlement communities to address both affordable housing and non-housing community development issues. Information from the surveys helped to identify priority housing and community development needs.

State Agency Consultation

OCD convened two focus groups with representatives from various state agencies on January 27, 2000, to discuss housing needs for the Consolidated Plan. OCD sent invitations to the Employment Security Department, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Social and Health Services, Department of Veterans Affairs, the State Human Rights Commission, the Department of Corrections, the Commission on African-American Affairs, the Commission on Asian American Affairs, the Commission on Hispanic Affairs, the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs, Department of Labor and Industries, and the Department of Health. More than a dozen state representatives met in the focus groups to discuss the housing market in the state, priority needs for their constituent groups, opportunities for collaboration between agencies, and key issues that need to be addressed in the Consolidated Plan. OCD used this information to develop a more accurate picture of housing needs in the state, particularly for those groups that may have been overlooked in formal studies and surveys.

Community Forums

OCD held community forums in Chehalis, Forks, Mt. Vernon, Seattle, Colville, Wenatchee, Moses Lake, Toppenish, and Walla Walla in May and June of 2000, to discuss housing and community development needs and strategies for the Consolidated Plan. Forums were held in locations around the state to encourage as much participation as possible from rural and mid-size communities as well as from the urban areas in our state. OCD mailed invitations to local and tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, housing agencies and developers, lenders, community and economic development organizations and other interested parties in each regional area. An average of 23 people attended each meeting. The state presented an overview of information that BAE collected on housing and community development needs during the previous six months. Participants were asked to identify any gaps in the needs assessment, their reaction to the draft priorities and strategies that OCD developed, and suggestions on issues that should be addressed in the Consolidated Plan. The summary of the community forums was mailed to each of the participants and has been retained as a formal record of the events. Attendees were also encouraged to submit written comments during the 30-day comment period from October 2nd to November 2, 2000.

Public Hearing

A notice was published on August 28, 2000 in the following newspapers: Daily World, Aberdeen; Daily Record, Ellensburg; Daily News, Longview; The Olympian, Olympia; Daily Journal of Commerce, Seattle; Spokesman Review, Spokane; Tri-City Herald, Tri-Cities; Yakima Herald Republic, Yakima. The notice informed the general public of the public hearing on September 13, 2000, and the 30 day comment period on the Consolidated Plan. The notice provided a summary of the proposed Consolidated Plan and a list of locations where copies of the entire proposed Consolidated Plan could be examined.

A public hearing was held on September 13, 2000 at six videoconference sites in Lacey, Renton, Spokane, Kennewick, Vancouver and Yakima. Participants at the hearing learned about the Consolidated Plan process from OCD staff and were provided the opportunity to ask questions,

comment, and provide input on existing and new strategies as well as the proposed distribution of funds for housing and community development during the 2001 program year. The proceedings of the hearings were video taped and retained as a formal record of the event.

Public Comment Period

After considering input and comments gathered during the 30 day public comment period, OCD completed the proposed 2001-2005 Consolidated Plan. The Consolidated Plan was made available for public review and comment from October 2, 2000 to November 2, 2000. The plan was made available on OCD's web site at www.oed.wa.gov, and upon request from OCD. Copies are available at the nearest Timberland library facility and at Community Action Agencies.